

GEORGE WASHINGTON MEMORIAL PARKWAY

Safety Improvements

14th Street Bridge and Columbia Island



Public Meeting

For the **George Washington Memorial Parkway Safety Improvements Study** is scheduled for **Tuesday, June 19, 2001** from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM at the Aurora Hills Recreation Center, Arlington, VA. A second public meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, June 20, 2001** from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM at the National Park Service National Capital Region Headquarters, Washington, DC.

PLANNING & ENGINEERING STUDY INITIATED

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the National Park Service (NPS), George Washington Memorial Parkway Unit, are beginning a planning and engineering study to investigate current roadway and traffic conditions on the GWMP in the vicinity of the 14th Street Bridge/I-395 and Columbia Island.

Representatives of the FHWA and the NPS will be available at the public meetings to informally discuss the study and proposed safety improvements. No formal presentation will be made. All interested citizens and interest groups are invited to attend the meeting.

BACKGROUND

The George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP) is mostly located in Virginia, on the west side of the Potomac River. The parkway extends from the Capital Beltway (I-495) on the northern end to Slaters Lane in Alexandria on the southern end. The Columbia Island portion of the GWMP is located in the District of Columbia. A number of recreational, historical and memorial sites are also located along the GWMP, including Theodore Roosevelt Island Park, the Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ) Memorial Grove, the Navy-Marine Corps Memorial and Columbia Island Marina. The Mount Vernon Trail, a bicycle and pedestrian route, extends along the GWMP and the Potomac River from Theodore Roosevelt Island to Mt. Vernon, south of the City of Alexandria.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The study will identify roadway and bicycle/pedestrian trail improvements necessary to safely and efficiently accommodate motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians using the parkway. Investigations will focus on several GWMP interchanges with the 14th Street Bridge/I-395 and on the intersection of the GWMP and the entrance to the Columbia Island Marina and the Navy-Marine Corps Memorial.



Study Area and Sites to be Investigated

The study and recommendations will focus on the following locations:

1. Columbia Island Marina and Navy-Marine Corps Memorial entrances at the GWMP.
2. Southbound I-395 (*George Mason Bridge*) ramp to northbound GWMP.
3. Northbound I-395 (*Rocheambeau Bridge*) ramp to northbound GWMP.
4. Proposed southbound GWMP ramp to northbound I-395 (*Rocheambeau Bridge*).
5. Southbound GWMP ramp to southbound I-395.

While the parkway was originally constructed to commemorate the first president, preserve the natural setting along the Potomac River and provide a fittingly grand and scenic entryway for visitors to the nation's capital, it has evolved into a primary commuter route between Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia. With the increase in traffic volumes and speeds, the GWMP now exhibits interstate traffic characteristics. Regular users of the parkway commonly display high-speed aggressive driving habits that can frequently result in unsafe traffic maneuvers and accidents. Visitors to the Washington, DC area, while in the minority in the traffic stream, are also frequent users of the GWMP. They can be characterized by unsure and

slower driving habits and are typically being pushed along at faster speeds than they would normally go by the prevailing commuter traffic flows.

Motorist Safety

Seven of the top ten accident sites on the GWMP are located in the segment between the Arlington Memorial Bridge and Ronald Reagan National Airport, according to NPS records. Site 2, the southbound I-395/George Mason Bridge ramp to northbound GWMP, was identified as the location of the most accidents. The intersection of the Columbia Island Marina/Navy-Marine Corps Memorial entrance and the GWMP, site 1, was the seventh most frequent accident site. Site 5 has also been identified in previous NPS and FHWA studies as a high accident location.

In addition to the frequency of accidents, a number of the study locations exhibit operational and design deficiencies that raise safety concerns and result in regular traffic delays and congestion. Sites 2, 3 and 5 are frequent congestion points, due to deficient ramp and roadway design.

Bicyclist and Pedestrian Safety

Sites 1 and 2 also raise concerns for bicyclist and pedestrian safety. While an at-grade crosswalk is located just north of site 1, the entrance to the Columbia Island Marina and Navy-Marine Corps Memorial, most trail users crossing back and forth between the east side and the west side of the GWMP at this location do not use it. Many cross at the marina entrance, often stopping in the roadway median to wait for a break in the traffic, where they conflict with vehicle traffic.

The Boundary Channel Bridge is located just north of Site 2. The parkway and bike trail approaches to the bridge are steep, resulting in poor sight distance for both the motorist and the trail user. At the bridge, the trail narrows from about eight feet to approximately three feet in width. A concrete curb is all that separates bicycle and pedestrian traffic from vehicle traffic. No other protective separation between the trail and roadway is provided.



Boundary Channel Bridge

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process will take place over the next year. Steps in the process include:

- ⇒ **Information Gathering**
 - ✓ Identify Issues and Concerns
 - ✓ Public Involvement Meeting
- ⇒ **Develop and Evaluate Alternatives**
 - ✓ Analyze Data Gathered
 - ✓ Develop Candidate Alternatives
 - ✓ Public Involvement Meeting
- ⇒ **Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) of the Proposed Action**
 - ✓ Analyze Potential Impacts and Select a Preferred Alternative
 - ✓ Publication of Draft EA for Public Review
 - ✓ Public Involvement Meeting
- ⇒ **Final Recommendations and Final Environmental Assessment**

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A series of Public Involvement Meetings will be held to allow the general public to be involved in the planning process and to keep them informed of the project status. All interested citizens and interest groups are invited to attend the meetings. They will provide an opportunity to ask questions and offer comments as issues and concerns are identified and as alternatives are being developed and analyzed. Verbal or written comments are requested. Comments may be presented at the public meetings or submitted by mail or FAX. Additional information is available by calling Christine Hoeffner at (703) 742-5873.

Send written comments to:

Mr. Alan Teikari, Planning and Coordination Engineer
Federal Highway Administration
Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division
21400 Ridgetop Circle
Sterling, VA 20166-6511
FAX (703) 404-6217

Public Involvement Meeting One

The first set of Public Involvement Meetings to discuss the George Washington Memorial Parkway Safety Improvements will be held as follows:

TUESDAY, JUNE 19, 2001

4:00 PM TO 7:00 PM

Aurora Hills Community Center

735 18TH Street South.

Arlington, VA 22202

&

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 20, 2001

4:00 PM TO 7:00 PM

NPS National Capital Region Headquarters

1100 Ohio Drive, SW

Washington, DC 20242

The Aurora Hills meeting at will be held in the center's meeting room. Parking is available adjacent to the recreation center. The National Capital Region Headquarters meeting will be held in the cafeteria. Parking is available adjacent to the building.

Representatives of the National Park Service and the Federal Highway Administration will be available to informally discuss the study and proposed safety improvements. No formal presentation will be made. Verbal and written comments are requested. Comments may be presented at the meeting or in writing following the meeting.

If you are unable to attend one of the Public Involvement Meetings, written comments should be postmarked by **July 21, 2001** and sent to Mr. Alan Teikari, FHWA Planning and Coordination Engineer at the address listed above. For additional information about the meeting, please call (703) 742-5873.

PROJECT NEWSLETTER

Newsletters will be published periodically as the planning process progresses to inform the general public and interest groups about the findings of the study and the project status. Please provide your name and address to be added to our mailing list. If you know of any individuals and/or organizations interested in this study that would like to receive project newsletters or attend public meetings, please provide their name and address. Thank you.

To be added to the mailing list, send your name and address to:

Christine Hoeffner

Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade & Douglas, Inc.

465 Spring Park Place

Herndon, VA 20170

FAX (703) 742-5797